
April 1997

Military Operations and Capabilities Issue Area Plan

Fiscal Years 1995-98



Foreword

As the investigative arm of Congress and the nation's auditor, the General Accounting Office is charged with following the federal dollar wherever it goes. Reflecting stringent standards of objectivity and independence, GAO's audits, evaluations, and investigations promote a more efficient and cost-effective government; expose waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement in federal programs; help Congress target budget reductions; assess financial information management; and alert Congress to developing trends that may have significant fiscal or budgetary consequences. In fulfilling its responsibilities, GAO performs original research and uses hundreds of databases or creates its own when information is unavailable elsewhere.

To ensure that GAO's resources are directed toward the most important issues facing Congress, each of GAO's 32 issue areas develops a strategic plan that describes the significance of the issues it addresses, its objectives, and the focus of its work. Each issue area relies heavily on input from congressional committees, agency officials, and subject-matter experts in developing its strategic plan.

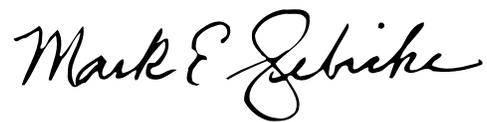
The Military Operations and Capabilities issue area covers programs of the Department of Defense, the individual military services, and other supporting defense agencies. GAO's work in this issue area includes assessments of military planning activities; the Department of Defense's (DOD) budgeting for operation and maintenance (O&M); the capability, performance, readiness, and sustainability of military forces, weapons, and support systems; and initiatives aimed at maintaining a quality force. The principal issues covered are

- the accuracy of budget estimates for DOD's O&M account and the potential for greater savings and efficiencies;
- the capability of military forces, weapons, and support systems to carry out their expected roles in the National Military Strategy and their performance in actual operations;
- the readiness and sustainability of military forces to perform their assigned missions and the potential to enhance or sustain readiness at less cost; and
- the effectiveness of DOD's efforts to recruit and retain a quality force, and maintain needed quality of life programs.

In the pages that follow, we describe our key planned work on these critical defense issues.

Foreword

Because events may significantly affect even the best of plans and because periodic measurement of success against any plan is essential, our planning process allows for updating and the flexibility to respond quickly to emerging issues. If you have any questions or suggestions about this plan, please call me at (202) 512-5140.



Mark E. Gebicke
Director, Military Operations
and Capabilities Issues

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Table I: Key Issues

Issue	Significance
Planning and budgeting: Have DOD and the military services prepared accurate O&M budgets, and are there opportunities to reduce these costs?	Members of Congress have had dual concerns that DOD has overbudgeted for some items while underbudgeting for others. The latter concern is apt to take on even greater significance as budget pressures continue and pressures build to devote a greater portion of defense resources to modernization. At the same time, both Congress and the administration are eager to identify opportunities to reduce O&M costs. Our identification of potential reductions can interject greater accountability into the budgeting process and permit reallocation of funds where needed.
Capabilities and performance: Has DOD fielded capable forces, weapon systems, and support elements, and are they performing as expected?	Successful military operations are predicated on the presumption that critical functional force elements and weapon systems can achieve their mission. Our assessments will identify critical shortfalls that could jeopardize operations as well as excess capabilities that might be eliminated and thereby assist future decisions on force structure, training, and capital investments. Examining performance in exercises and actual operations provides the best indicator of capability.
Readiness and sustainability: Are U.S. military forces ready to effectively carry out their assigned missions, can supporting systems sustain them, and can readiness be sustained or enhanced at less cost?	Congress wants to avoid a return to a "hollow" force, unprepared to fight the nation's wars. Readiness problems, however, may, in fact, reflect poor resource allocation decisions, or failure to recognize more cost-effective opportunities to sustain or even enhance training. Better management of defense resources may be the key to ensuring needed readiness in a constrained resource environment.
Quality of the force: Do DOD and the military services have effective programs to recruit and retain a quality force, and maintain needed quality-of-life programs?	A smaller military must emphasize quality, continuity, and high morale. Sound recruiting efforts, meaningful training, career development opportunities, and effective quality-of-life programs are essential if DOD is to retain a quality force.

Table I: Key Issues

Objectives	Focus of Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examine adequacy of justifications associated with DOD's O&M budget requests with an emphasis on identifying requests that are greater than documented requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical reviews of DOD's annual O&M budget requests to identify potential savings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Target selected budget/program items for in-depth evaluation to better identify the potential for reductions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More detailed reviews of selected DOD O&M programs to identify potential reductions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examine outsourcing/privatization and other options for meeting base operations and facilities infrastructure needs at less cost.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical reviews of outsourcing/privatization initiatives and case studies to identify industry best practices applicable to government.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alert Congress and DOD to limitations and imbalances in selected operational capabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reviews to assess whether imbalances exist in ways, means, and ends of selected capability areas in relationship to requirements. Also, reviews of the adequacy of actions taken to correct shortfalls and eliminate excesses in various capability areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate the adequacy of DOD actions taken to properly size forces according to their anticipated missions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessments of the performance of selected functional capabilities in recent operations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify performance shortfalls that could undermine success in future operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aggregation, retention, and analysis of readiness indicator data developed by the services and reported to the Office of the Secretary of Defense.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide Congress with data important to tracking trends in readiness and identifying reasons for any variances. Also, determine whether readiness indicators used by DOD and the services provide a reliable and comprehensive assessment of readiness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reviews to determine effectiveness of training and exercises in preparing forces for combat, and identify opportunities to accomplish this at a lower cost.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify ways to maintain readiness at lower cost.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reviews of sustainment functions to identify excesses that divert funds from more productive uses and shortages that hamper readiness.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess whether maintenance, supply, and other support systems effectively and efficiently ensure readiness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessments of DOD and service force management issues such as recruiting, attrition, and grade structure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess DOD's efforts to provide the necessary incentives to recruit and retain a quality force.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessments of the force balance occurring through various downsizing actions (military and civilian).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine if DOD's drawdown is achieving a balanced active, reserve, and civilian workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluations of quality-of-life initiatives such as enlisted and family housing, and other family support programs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess the efficacy of ongoing quality-of-life initiatives.	

Table II: Planned Major Work

Issue	Planned Major Job Starts
Planning and budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of DOD's fiscal year 1998 O&M budget request • Lessons learned from large-scale base support contracting • Reducing O&M in family housing • Reserve component planning and budgeting for infrastructure
Capabilities and performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOD's role in antiterrorism • DOD's critical battlefield information systems • DOD's determination of future medical personnel requirements • Bosnia lessons learned • Conflicts/impediments to increased jointness
Readiness and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of safety principles used in dangerous military training • Potential savings from increased use of simulation training • Impact of the Army's battlefield digitization effort • Best practices in applying distance learning to training • Update on comprehensive system to measure readiness • Follow-up on ammunition management in the United States
Quality of the force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in DOD's joint manpower process • Enlisted force grade structure increases • First-term attrition • Military recruiters' quota systems • DOD's unaccompanied housing program

Table III: GAO Contacts

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